

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6184

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PEKING 1583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EINUR ELTN CH

SUBJECT: ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE: PRELIMINARY
INDICATIONS

1. THE EFFECT OF THE JULY 25 TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE ON THE
CHINESE ECONOMY WAS SEVERE, BUT LOCALIZED THE MOST
OBVIOUS DAMAGE WAS TO TRANSPORTATION AND COMM-
UNICATIONS, BUT SOME OF THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN

REPAIRED. DAMAGE TO INDUSTRY WAS VERY HEAVY IN THE
TANGSHAN AREA OF HOPEI PROVINCE, FAIRLY SERIOUS IN
PARTS OF TIENTSIN MUNICIPALITY, INCLUDING THE CITY OF
TIENTSIN, AND NEGLIGIBLE IN PEKING AND LIAONING. DAMAGE
TO AGRICULTURE WAS GENERALLY LIGHT.

2. THE EARTHQUAKE AT 0347 THE EVENING OF JULY 28 WAS
ESTIMATED TO BE OF FORCE 7.5 (CHINESE ESTIMATE) TO 8.2
(US ESTIMATE) ON THE RIEHTER SCALE, WITH AN EPICENTER
ABOUT 25 KILOMETERS SOUTH-SOUTHWEST OF TANGSHAN, HOPEI, A
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MAJOR COAL MINING AND INDUSTRIAL CENTER, AND ABOUT 82

KILOMETERS NORTHEAST OF TIENTSIN, A MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMUNICATIONS CENTER. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY AFTER-SHOCKS, THE LARGEST FORCE 7.9. THE AREA IS HEAVILY POPULATED; TANGSHAN, WHICH WAS DESTROYED, HAD AN ESTIMATED 1,060,000 PEOPLE, TIENTSIN, WHICH SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE, OVER 3,000,000, AND THE RURAL POPULATION IS DENSE. THE EARTHQUAKE STRUCK WHEN MOST OF THE POPULATION WAS ASLEEP, AND NO WARNING WAS GIVEN TO EVACUATE BUILDINGS. THE NUMBER OF DEAD IS NOT KNOWN, BUT IS BELIEVED TO BE VERY LARGE. BESIDE TANGSHAN ITSELF, THE MOST SERIOUSLY DAMAGED AREAS WERE THE FENGNNAN, LUANHSIEN, FEGJUN, AND LUANNAN DISTRICTS IN EASTERN HOPEI PROVINCE, AND NINGHO COUNTY IN TIENTSIN MUNICIPALITY.

3. TRANSPORTATION. THE EARTHQUAKE BROKE THE PEKING-HARBIN RAILROAD AT "SEVERAL TENS" OF POINTS BETWEEN TIENTSIN AND PEITAIHO AND SHUT OFF SERVICE TO TANGSHAN. THE TIENTSIN-PEKING LINE CONTINUED TO FUNCTION, ALTHOUGH THE PORTION BETWEEN TIENTSIN AND PEKING WAS BADLY JAMMED AT LEAST THROUGH JULY 29. SERVICE WAS ALSO BROKEN ON TWO MINOR LINES, ONE FROM TIENTSIN TO CHIHHSIEN, IN THE NORTHERNMOST PART OF TIENTSIN MUNICIPALITY, AND ANOTHER FROM TUNGHSIEN A FEW KILOMETERS SOUTH TO TOTZUTOU IN PEKING MUNICIPALITY. SERVICE ON THE TIENTSIN-CHIHHSIEN LINE WAS RESTORED BY AUGUST 1, ON THE TUNGHSIEN-TOTZUTOU LINE BY AUGUST 3, AND ON ONE OF THE TWO TRACKS ON THE MAIN LINE THROUGH TANGSHAN BY AUGUST 7. THE DAMAGE WAS EXTENSIVE; THE BED CRACKED AND SANK, AND THE RAILS WERE TWISTED AND BROKEN AT MANY PLACES ALONG A 230-KILOMETER STRETCH, AND "SEVERAL TENS" OF BRIDGES WERE DAMAGED, INCLUDING LARGE BRIDGES OVER THE CHI CANAN AND THE NEW YUNG-TING RIVER IN TIENTSIN MUNICIPALITY AND THE LUAN RIVER IN HOPEI.

4. ALTHOUGH ROAD TRANSPORTATION MUST HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED ALMOST AS MUCH AS RAILROAD TRAFFIC, WE HAVE NO DIRECT REPORTS EXCEPT THAT VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE LABOR UNION AT THE TANGSHAN COAL MINE REPORTEDLY DROVE TO PEKING THE MORNING OF JULY 28. BY JULY 30, TRUCKS WERE ENTERING PEKING FROM TANGSHAN, AND WE HAVE SEEN MANY SINCE.

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5. MILITARY AIRFIELDS WERE USED TO EVACUATE FOREIGNERS FROM TIENTSIN, TANGSHAN, AND PEITAIHO WITHIN A FEW HOURS OF THE EARTHQUAKE, AND WERE USED TO FLY IN RESCUE TEAMS "DAY AND NIGHT". DAMAGE CANNOT HAVE BEEN GREAT AT THESE FIELDS. THERE WAS NO APPARENT DAMAGE TO THE PEKING INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

6. WE HAVE HAD NO WORD OF DAMAGE TO THE PIPELINES FROM

TACHING TO CHINWANGTAO AND PEKING OR THE GAS LINE FROM TAKANG TO TIENTSIN, EXCEPT BY IMPLICATION IN THE REPORT THAT THERE WAS NO INTERRUPTION OF PRODUCTION AT THE PEKING PETROCHEMICAL PLANT OR THE PEKING TUNGFANGHUNG REFINERY. CHINESE TECHNICIANS AT THE PEKING PETRO-CHEMICAL PLANT, HOWEVER, EXPRESSED CONCERN AUGUST OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAK.

7. INFORMATION ON SHIPPING HAS BEEN CONFLICTING: SHIPPERS IN HONG KONG HAVE BEEN TOLD TO SEND NO SHIPS TO HSINKANG IN AUGUST, AND THE FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD TO SEND NO PERSONAL EFFECTS THROUGH HSINKANG FOR SIX MONTHS. HSINKANG IS CONGESTED AT BEST, WITH 3-4 WEEKS TURNAROUND TIME, AND EVEN MINOR DAMAGE WOULD AGGRAVATE ITS PROBLEMS. A JAPANESE SHIP IN HSINKANG DURING THE QUAKE WAS ORDERED OUT OF THE HARBOR IMMEDIATELY, WITHOUT EVEN LOADING CARGO. THE MASTER OBSERVED ONLY MINOR DAMAGE, BUT SHIPPING WAS SUSPENDED THE SAME DAY.

8. THE JAPANESE HAVE TRIED, SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS, TO FIND OUT IF OIL IS STILL BEING SHIPPED FROM CHINWANGTAO. A JAPANESE SHIP HAS BEEN ASKED TO LOAD OIL IN TALIEH; ANOTHER HAS BEEN TOLD TO LOAD ITS NORMAL SHIPMENT OF COAL IN CHINWANGTAO NEXT WEEK.

9. COMMUNICATIONS. COMMUNICATIONS WITH TANGSHAN WERE BROKEN BY THE EARTHQUAKE, BUT THEY WERE RESTORED THROUGH A WIRE FROM A "SUBURBAN" OFFICE WHICH REMAINED OPEN. WHEN THE JAPANESE EMBASSY TRIED TO SEND A TELEGRAM TO CHINWANGTAO, THEY WERE TOLD THAT IT WAS "IN THE AREA TO WHICH TELEGRAMS COULD NOT BE SENT". WE HAVE HAD NO REPORTS ON TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS TO THE EARTHQUAKE AREA OR ON THE TIENTSIN TELEVISION STATION. THERE WAS
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APPARENTLY NO DAMAGE IN PEKING.

10. INDUSTRY. THE CITY OF TANGSHAN, WHICH IS A MAJOR MINING AND INDUSTRIAL CENTER, WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN "FLATTENED", AND DAMAGE TO ITS MINES AND INDUSTRY WAS EVIDENTLY GREAT. OUR INFORMATION IS SCANTY, EXCEPT FOR THAT GIVEN US BY THE JAPANESE EMBASSY ON THE GENERATOR COMPLEX BEING ASSEMBLED UNDER DIRECTION OF HITACHI. THIS COMPLEX, TOTALLING 750 MEGAWATTS, WAS TO CONSIST OF TWO 250 MW GENERATORS AND TWO 125 MW GENERATORS. ONE OF THE LARGER GENERATORS WAS COMPLETE, AND WAS UNDERGOING TESTS WHEN THE EARTHQUAKE STRUCK AND THE ROOF OF THE BUILDING COLLAPSED ONTO THE GENERATOR. THE SECOND 250 MW GENERATOR HAD BEEN DELIVERED TO TANGSHAN, BUT HAD NOT YET BEEN UNCRATED. CONSTRUCTION HAD STARTED

ON ONE OF THE 125 MW PLANTS, BUT THE PARTIALLY-FINISHED BUILDING WAS DESTROYED. CONSTRUCTION PERSONNEL WERE HOUSED IN THREE-STORY BRICK APARTMENT BUILDINGS, ALL OF WHICH COLLAPSED, KILLING A LARGE NUMBER.

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11. THE POWER SUPPLY TO TANGSHAN WAS CUT OFF COMPLETELY BUT BY AUGUST 8 WAS RESTORED AT LEAST TO SOME MINES. IT IS PROBABLY NOT YET IN FULL OPERATION, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT TANGSHAN IS IN A POWER NETWORK WITH PEKING AND TIENTSIN, WHICH SHOULD SPEED RESTORATION OF AT LEAST SOME SERVICE.

12. NCNA AUGUST 7 REPORTED A "WELL-KNOWN STEEL WORKER" AS SAYING THAT TANGSHAN IRON AND STEEL PLANT HAD SUFFERED "HEAVY LOSSES." THE FACT THAT THEY WERE VISITED BY PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG MAY INDICATE THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE AS WELL AS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLANT. THE 422 CEMENT PLANT WAS MENTIONED AS A PLACE WHERE WORK TO RESTORE PRODUCTION WAS IN PROGRESS, BUT WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON ANY OTHER DAMAGE TO INDUSTRY IN TANGSHAN.

13. THERE WAS SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE KAILUAN COAL MINE COMPLEX WHICH EXTENDS SOME 50 KM FROM EAST TO WEST AND IS CHINA'S LARGEST. A JAPANESE VISITOR IN MID-JUNE RE-
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PORTED OUTPUT AT 25,200,000 METRIC TONS, AND WORKING FORCE AT 100,000, 40-50,000 OF WHOM WERE BELOW GROUND, WORKING IN THREE SHIFTS. THE WORST DAMAGED OF THE KAILUAN COMPLEX WERE THE TANGSHAN AND LUCHIATO MINES, WHERE POWER FAILURES CUT OFF BOTH ELEVATORS AND PUMPS, TRAPPING THE MINERS AND ALLOWING WATER TO ENTER THE PITS, SOME OF WHICH ARE OVER 800 METERS DEEP. PRODUCTION STOPPED COMPLETELY, AND BY AUGUST 5 THE HSUANHUA (HOPEI) IRON AND STEEL COMPANY REPORTED A SHORTAGE OF COKING COAL WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN SUPPLIED FROM THE KAILUAN MINES.

14. POWER WAS RESTORED IN THE LUCHIATO, MACHIAKOU, AND LINHSI MINES BY AUGUST 8, AND PRODUCTION WAS REPORTED RESUMED IN ONE PIT AT MACHIAKOU. ACCORDING TO NCNA, 10,000 MINERS, THE "OVERWHELMING MAJORITY" OF THOSE UNDERGROUND, WERE BROUGHT UP SAFELY BY AUGUST 8. A PEKING DOCTOR IN A HOSPITAL DOING EMERGENCY WORK ON WOUNDED EVACUATED FROM TANGSHAN TOLD AN AMERICAN PATIENT THAT MOST OF THE WOUNDED HAD BEEN ABOVE GROUND, NOT BELOW. (JAPANESE COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR MURATA, WHO SPENT TWO YEARS IN MITI COAL MINE SAFETY WORK, INFORMS US THAT JAPANESE COAL MINES HAVE SUFFERED ONLY RELATIVELY MINOR DAMAGE BELOW GROUND IN SERIOUS EARTHQUAKES).

15. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, DAMAGE IN TIENTSIN WAS LESS SERIOUS. TECHNICIANS NEAR TAKANG OILFIELD FELT A STRONG SHOCK, BUT SAW NO DAMAGE. THERE WERE NO INTERRUPTIONS IN POWER SUPPLY EXCEPT ON A LINE IN

TAKANG, WHERE IT WAS QUICKLY RESTORED. ITALIAN TECHNICIANS TRAVELLING THROUGH TIENTSIN IN EARLY AUGUST REPORTED HEAVY DAMAGE AND A THIRD OF THE BUILDINGS DESTROYED, BUT THIS IS THE ONLY REPORT OF THIS KIND WE HAVE HAD FROM TIENTSIN. DAMAGE TO PRODUCTION IN PEKING MINICIPALITY WAS REPORTED ONLY TO THE TUNGHSIEN-TOTZUTOU RAIL LINE MENTIONED IN PARA 3 ABOVE AND TO TWO WATER MAINS, ONE OF WHICH WAS AT THE PEKING PETROCHEMICAL PLANT. JAPANESE TECHNICIANS SAID TO THE JAPANESE EMBASSY THAT THERE WAS NO DAMAGE AT THIS PLANT, OR AT THE TUNGFANGHUNG PETROLEUM REFINERY WHICH SUPPLIES IT WITH GAS, BUT THEN WERE
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CONCERNED ABOUT A POSSIBLE BREAK IN THE PIPELINE FROM TACHING. THE PRESS HAS MENTIONED NO DAMAGE IN LIAONING PROVINCE, AND US AND JAPANESE TECHNICIANS REPORTED NO DAMAGE IN PANSHAN AND CHINCHOU, RESPECTIVELY.

16. AGRICULTURE. VERY LITTLE HAS BEEN SAID IN THE CHINESE PRESS ABOUT AGRICULTURE, AND DAMAGE TO CROPS IS ASSUMED TO BE LIGHT. NEAR PEKING THERE IS NONE. TIENTSIN COMMUNES WERE ADMONISHED TO PROTECT SEED, ANIMALS, MACHINES AND TOOLS, AND TAKE CARE OF FIELD MANAGEMENT. HSIAOCHINCHUANG COMMUNE, FAVORED BY CHIANG CHING, "SHOWED HEROISM" IN RESPONDING TO THE EARTHQUAKE BY CALLING A MASS RALLY, TOP-DRESSING 13 HECTARES OF CORN, MISSING ONLY ONE NIGHT OF CLASSES IN THE POLITICAL SCHOOL REHEARSING A NEW THEATRICAL PIECE CALLED "ANTI-QUAKE PAPER", AND WRITING POEMS TO BOOST MORALE. APPARENTLY DAMAGE WAS LIGHT AT HSIAOCHINCHUANG.

17. IRRIGATION WORKS BETWEEN TANGSHAN AND TIENTSIN, SUCH AS THE LARGE DIKES ON THE NEW YUNGTING HO, AND OTHER PARTS OF THE NORTHEASTERN PORTION OF THE HAI BASIN, HAVE NOT BEEN REPORTED DAMAGED. THERE WAS SOME FEAR FOR RESERVOIRS, PARTICULARLY ONE NORTHWEST OF TANGSHAN ON THE TOU RIVER, BUT NONE HAS BEEN REPORTED TO HAVE COLLAPSED. THE CHINESE HAVE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS WITH THE MING TOMBS RESERVOIR NEAR PEKING AND HAVE PRESUMABLY DONE SO WITH THE OTHERS.

17. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IF THERE WERE HEAVY LOSS OF LIFE IN THE TANGSHAN AREA THERE MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH COMMUNE WORKERS TO BRING IN THE FALL HARVEST. THERE HAS BEEN NO HINT OF SUCH A HIGH TOLL IN THE RURAL AREAS. HOWEVER SEVERAL THOUSAND MEDICAL PERSONNEL, INCLUDING SPECIALISTS IN EPIDEMIC DISEASE, WERE DISPATCHED TO THE AFFLICTED AREA.

18. THE PRELIMINARY APPRECIATION OF THE EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE ABOVE IS COMPILED FROM SKETCHY INFORMATION MENTIONED IN CHINESE MEDIA AND GLEANED FROM OTHER EMBASSIES IN PEKING, PARTICULARLY THE JAPANESE. GIVEN THE GREAT DAMAGE AND LOSS OF LIFE WHICH ALMOST CERTAINLY RESULTED FROM THIS EARTHQUAKE, THE PRC IS LIKELY TO BE EVEN MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETIVE THAN USUAL, AND IT MAY TAKE YEARS TO GET EVEN AN APPROXIMATELY COMPLETE ACCOUNT.
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